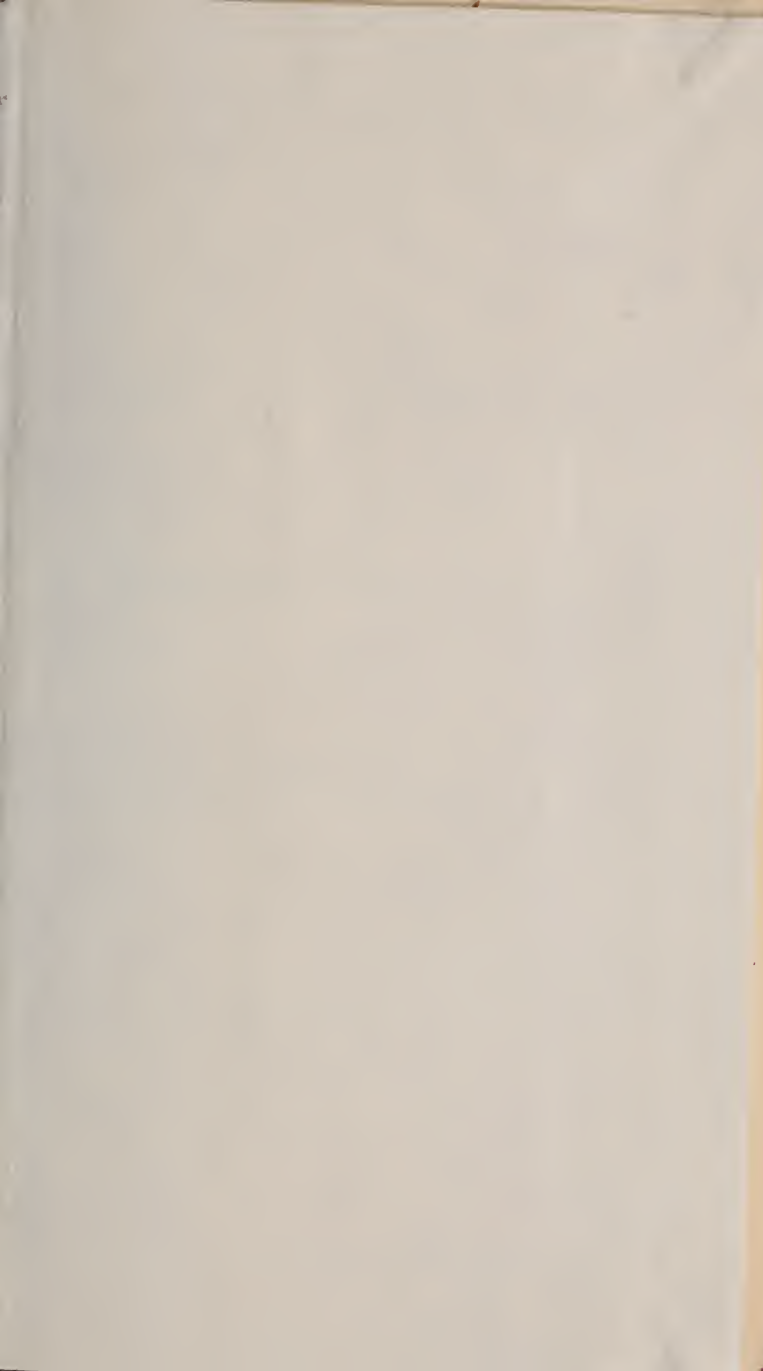


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ARGO AND IRENE,

Dramatic Composition,

BY DR. J. R. MONROE.

SEYMOUR, INDIANA, JUNE, 1874.

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ARGO AND IRENE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ARGO, a poet.	IRENE.
MAGOON, an old man of low habits, but a millionaire.	MOTHER TO IRENE.
NOTARY PUBLIC.	LAWYER.
PUBLISHER.	CRITIC.
DR. SPANKER.	DR. SMICK.
TUBBS.	DR. SLABBS.
TWO OLD LADIES.	DR. ABRAM TURNER, (Colored.)
TWO SERVANTS.	SERVANT TO IRENE, (Colored.)
	FRIENDS AND ATTENDANTS.

ACT I.

*SCENE I. A Ladies Room. Irene seated at a Table. Enter
Servant with Letters.*

Serv. I hab youh letters, Miss Irene. You gets a heap ob
lub letters, but you is a lubbly young lady. You is de lub-
bliest ob de lubbly and de sweetest ob de sweetly.

Irene. Why, what insolence !

Serv. Insolence ?

Irene. Yes, insolence, you black scamp !

Serv. Black scamp ? Look a heah, Miss ; Ize a gemmen, if
I is culled !

Irene. You a gentleman ! Ain't you a nigger ?

Serv. Niggah ! niggah, Miss ! dar be no niggahs now.
True nuff, Ize culled, but Ize no niggah. Ize a gemmen ob
cullah. Massa Linkum wiped out de stigma ob niggah. Ize
de ekal ob de white man in 'spectability and 'telligence.

Irene. Yes ?

Serv. Yes, Miss, I is ; de law gibs me ekality before it and
behind it, and Ize gwine to hab my rights. I admires youh
beauty, bad as you treats me, and I hab a right to 'spress my
feelins if I is culled and is youh servant. Niggah, to be
shuah !

Irene. Well, well Sam, I'm not going to fall out with you.
See if my mother does't want you below.

Serv. All right, Miss ; Ize not mad. I ges wanted to show
you dat I hab de spirit ob a man, if I is culled, and dat I is
a warm 'mirer ob de female sec, ob whom you is de perfec-
tion dareof. [Exit.]

Irene. Alas, what have we come to in this country,

When all the servants think themselves the equal
 Of those whom they do serve. Can we raise them
 To our refinement and intelligence?
 Or will we rather, by the force of habit,
 Through constant commerce with the serving class,
 Sink to their level? But this sooty fellow
 Admires my beauty; in his amorous eye,
 (Looks in the glass.)

There lives a critic who doth say: She pretty;
 And compliments unto a woman's beauty,
 Are sweet to the possessor of that beauty,
 Nor can she wholly hate the man who pays them,
 Though he were seven times black.
 (Opens a letter and reads.)

TO MY HEART'S IDOL.

How slight a circumstance may blast,
 The blossoms the young heart puts forth,
 And tender buds of hope—how fast
 They fall in frosts of frigid north.

This morn our wishes are in flower,
 Amid the golden harvest sheaves,
 But ere the noon come blight and shower,
 And we have but the wilted leaves.

O heart of lover, doubting still,
 And never peaceful and at rest,
 But ever wooing omens ill
 To weigh upon the weary breast.

O there are moments when the heart,
 The lover's quick barometer,
 Doth feel the death ere yet the dart
 Hath left the string whence it doth whir.

ARGO.

Alack, what means this riddle? how is this?
 Doth he spy out the evils that await him?
 By intuition hath his fruitful mind
 Some dread forebodement? O there is a sadness—
 An air of plaintive wailing in his song
 That falls like funeral dirge. It breaks my heart.
 I who do love him, but must still betray him,
 Do feel the force of his great spirit more,
 The farther I go from him.

(Opens another letter and reads.)

DEAR DUCK.—I have just returned from Europe, and shall
 call upon you to-day. I am glad you have kept the affair be-
 tween us so quiet that the quid-nuncs haven't got wind of it.
 Have a kiss of welcome for me, Love.

Have a kiss for me,
 Have one two three;
 I have scores for thee,
 And will spend them as free
 As the waters that run.

There, Duck, that is the first poetry I ever put upon paper,
 and here I am fifty-nine years of age last Wednesday.

Thine own true penny,
 M. MAGOON, Major.

(*Throws all the letters pettishly aside.*)

But fifty-nine on Wednesday. O how sad
 To see the old man fighting off his years,
 And faded dames in the decline of life,
 With artificial teeth and withered limbs,
 In gay attire and sallow cheek in paint,
 Still aping youth and keeping time at bay,
 Forswearing half the years that speak against them,
 And yielding, when compelled to, without grace.
 To the behests of age; O this is pitable.
 But still poor human nature may be pardoned,
 For lovely is our youth, our age decrepit;
 And not till youth hath slipped away and left us,
 And age, with ache and blindness and white hairs,
 Doth creep upon us do we value youth.
 No wonder then that the old man should strive,
 To keep away the years, and sweat and tug
 With every faculty that flags or fails him,
 To worry or to woo it to performance
 As in the flower of youth.

ENTER MOTHER.

Mother. I have good news, daughter. A note from Major Magoon informs me of his safe return from abroad, and that he will presently call upon us.

Irene. I have his autograph; he tells me here
 That he will call and claim me for his wife;
 And he hath written me a pretty song;
 For loving me hath made him court the muses;
 And I intend to set the song to music
 And play it to the fiddle at the wedding,
 And by the murmuring brook beneath the willows.

Mother. Now, Irene, I would! But I am glad to see you are reconciled to the match. Give me the Major's song.
 (*Reads it.*) A pretty song, I do declare. It is quite equal to any of the mad poet's productions. When you are Mrs. Magoon we shall be enabled to regain our lost position in society. It will be a splendid match. It will be the sensation of the season. You will be envied by the entire tribe of marriageable ladies in the city. The Major's great wealth will put us in a position to return with interest the many slights that have been shown us since your father's bankruptcy and death.

He is really a good-hearted, jolly old gentleman, and will keep you from despondency; and then if you should lose him in a few years you have his wealth. He has no heirs and proposes to will all to you before the marriage.

Irene. But mother bears he not a naughty name? They say he is the patron of light women, And thinks the best of us but little better Than those with whom he herds. Hath he not mistresses?

Mother. Well what of that? He is not worse than most men on that score.

Irene. I've seen tobacco juice on his white beard; He tipples, too, and smokes a sickening pipe; And snores I think, and has the night mare, too; And his fat belly comes down to his knees; He eats enormously, is coarse of speech, And gross and sensual in his appetites. How can I wive with him?

Mother. Nonsense, daughter; Do not think of these things. You can conquer his appetites. He is but mortal man. Refuse him if you will, but only your marriage with him will save us from beggary. I wish myself there were some other deliverance for us, but there is none. O what is to become of us!

Irene. Do not despair, dear mother; now suppose, I sell myself to this old man?—what then? What will become of Argo and of you? Argo will suicide, and can you hope As mother-in-law to lead a happy life With such a son-in-law? Will not his wassail— His retinue of riotous old men, with daily feast And nightly drinking bout, make you distract, Even if he give you shelter?

Mother. Not so fast, girl. The Major agrees to make a settlement upon me before the marriage. I shall have a home and be independent. As for Argo, the young man is muddled in his wits, and is so regarded; and his prospects are so poor that it matters little what he does or thinks.

Irene. But mother he has genius; it will tell; Like murder, it will out; it will be heard from.

Mother. It will out at the elbows; and be heard from the poor house, the mad house and the pauper's grave. Genius, my dear, is of mighty little account in this matter-of-fact age. There was excuse for genius in the days of Shakespeare and Byron; not that even they made anybody better or happier; but people were not then totally absorbed in the routine of fashion and money-making; and the poets served to amuse the wealthy and indolent classes. We have had quite enough of genius. Genius brings no advantages to its possessor, and very little to the world; and as a rule, it is so provokingly allied to poverty that genteel folks should shun it as a pestilence.

There is nothing, my dear, that can bring us true happiness but wealth and social position.

Irene. Well, Mother have your way ; I am resigned, You shall not live to say I let you want, When I could buy you bread ; but my poor heart Is with the spring time buds, not with the leaves Of sere and bleak November. O farewell ! I yield my all to destiny and will, Take fortune as it comes ; what is to be Will be ; come anything ; now I am wax, The merest child can mould me.

Mother. Really, child, I see nothing to invite despondency. The cards of fortune are running in your favor.

Irene. I will lend you my fortune, mother ; if You'll take the fat man with his money bags, I tender them to you.

Mother. He is an epicure, my child. He will diet upon spring chickens. But I must away and see that the house is put in order for his reception. [Exit Mother.]

Irene. And this it is to be a woman ; this Is money's power to purchase ; I am sold ; Sold to the highest bidder, like a slave, For uses worser and more loathed to me, Than e'er were stripes and drudgery to the slave In slavery's palmiest hour. A boy could not Be sold so like a horse to bear up such a bulk. O curse of sex ! why were not I a boy, That I might tease the pretty girls nor mate With rheumatis and wrinkles, gout and age Due at the grave yard any day 'n the week ! My sexuality is merchandize ; That with my beauty is my stock in trade ; And I must sell it for an hour, a night, Or for a life time. I have brought enough : The gossips will declare I am well sold ; For there is not a tongue in all the land But it will wag and say : she sold herself : She is well sold ; he is too good for her ; It was his money, not himself she married ; If he should cut her off without a cent He'd serve her right, the proud and heartless flirt, Who by her arts won the poor weak old man ! Thus will they scan me. But this is a play, Myself am the chief actor ; we shall see The end when it arrives ; chance will work out What destiny has fixed.

ENTER SERVANT.

Serv. De crazy young man dat cocks his eye at de moon and talks to hisself desires to see de angelic young lady ob de house, as he 'spresses it. Lod ! I wish I was dat young man crazy as he is !

Irene. Show him up.

[*Exit Servant.*]

Now you sustaining powers, come to my aid ;
 And you sleuth hags that sometime set a smile
 On face of gory murder whilst his steel,
 Moves stealthily to'ard heart of sleeping babe,
 Slink from your trails of blood and crouch you here ;
 Make stone my heart and stubborn wires my nerves ;
 Bring Satan's grand dam to make glib my tongue ;
 And Judas kisses for my honeyed lips ;
 Set on my face smooth sanctity's deceit ;
 Make cold my blood and freeze emotion's tide,
 And teach me to dissemble ; help me play
 The hypocrite and traitor so adroitly
 That the arch fiend himself shall envy me ;
 For I cannot, I dare not tell him truth ;
 And he must leave me thinking me an angel,
 And wake ere long to write me down a devil,
 The cunningest one extant ; for I cannot—
 No, no, I cannot, cannot, tell him all ;
 Hint at it even and face him I cannot :
 Like injury do I to myself and him,
 For blear-eyed treason whelms in common ruin
 Betrayer and betrayed.

ENTER ARGO.

Argo. The spirits that inhabit peaceful homes
 Rest in this house ! How fares my love to-day ?
 (*Takes both of her hands.*)

Irene. I am well and yet am ill. How is't with you ?

Argo. Quite well in body, but depressed in mind.
 I have not found a market for my wares,
 And now begin to think them valueless ;
 My plays and poems sleep in manuscript,
 For lack of name to give them currency,
 Or gold to buy the critic. Art thou ill ?

Irene. I was ; but now that you are here with me,
 There's healing in the air, and I am well ;
 I wish you could remain a hundred years.

Argo. I wish I could, and when I win a name
 Or any little fortune I will bring it
 And give it all thee.

Irene. Live coals of fire ! (*Aside.*)
 These words are cruel, Argo, and denote
 The presence of the mystic messenger,
 That sometimes gives the soul presentiment,
 Of viewless evils hedging it about.
 The mewling calf from teeming udder torn,
 Uplifts its frightened voice as if it saw
 In vacant air the gleaming butcher knives,
 Whet thin and sharp to shed its little blood.

Argo. I would not say a cruel word to thee.

Irene. Words fraught with love and kindness are at times ;

More murderous than the bitterest words of hate ;
 You wound but know not why.

Argo.

Then let me know it.

Irene. The powers that shape events do write in riddles,
 And signal us in omens and in dreams.
 And say in circumstance thought accidental
 A sermon every hour. Our minds are woven
 From threads pervading space in all directions,
 And interlaced, like webs of cunning spider,
 With every substance having shape or motion ;
 So any danger or disturbing force,
 That moves towards us agitates the mesh,
 And sends us trills of warning, could we read them.
 Do you believe in dreams ?

Argo.

No, nor in omens ;

Nor old women's signs ; but yet I'd rather
 Look first on the new moon o'er my right shoulder,
 As 'twere by accident, and not through brush ;
 There's nothing in it, but I have a preference,
 And when I miss my choice I look for trouble.
 My first glimpse at the new moon yesternight,
 Was purely accidental and was through
 The funeral branches of a weeping willow.
 Pray do not smile, but this slight circumstance,
 Doth weigh upon me like an incubus,
 Filling me with forebodings of some trouble
 Of more than common blight.

Irene. Then you will not be taken by surprise,
 Though shots may come from quarters least suspect
 Of harboring hidden foes. Had I the right
 I would be with you and shield you from danger
 In these my loving arms. Pride makes us slaves,
 And drives us from the flowery fields of summer,
 To starve in deserts and in discontent.

Argo. Thou art a woman—say what we should do ;
 A woman's instinct is worth more than proofs,
 Though sworn in open court.

Irene.

We should have married

And sought our fortunes after.

Argo.

No, not I :

Though thou art prescious as the sense of sight,
 I will prepare a cage to hold my bird
 Before I trap the bird. And more than this :
 There is no person worthy such a being ;
 Thou art so delicate in all thy tastes ;
 So pure of thought, so winning in thy ways ;
 So strangely facinating are thy smiles ;
 And so bewildering are the thousand graces
 That tongue cannot describe, that it were sin
 To blast thy bloom with marital debauch.
 'Tis not that I would marry thee, *Irene* ;

I would not smelt the coarse refuse that forms
 This uncouth, graceless, piece of mechanism,
 With the fine essences that enter in
 The precious compound of thy perfect person.
 O, no, I would not join this frame of mine,
 Composed of boils, carbuncles and corruption,
 To the fine, incorruptible qualities,
 That form the person of my sweet Irene.
 I'm but a man—thou art an angel pure,
 Bright as the stars, fair as a May-day morn—
 Canst thou be mortal?—thou must hail from heaven,
 For every element that enters into thee,
 Is the quintessence of divinity.
 Hence it were incongruity too gross
 For us to wed.

Yet thou must wed no other!

I fain would have thee by my side forever,
 Ay, even would wed and keep thee but to look at,
 Regarding thee a piece of ware too fine
 For mortal uses or even to be seen,
 Save on some holiday or Sabbath morn.
 I fain would be thy sentinel through life,
 And minister to thy daily, hourly wants;
 And guard thy snowy, untouched, innocence,
 Till heaven should take it back pure as 'twas given.
 If I could multiply myself into
 Ten thousand troops well drilled and well accoutred,
 The whole should form a body-guard for thee.
 This much I'd be thy husband, but no more.
 Let housemaids keep the baser passions cool—
 Let them bear offspring and contort the face,
 Inflate the cheek, roll back the eye and groan,
 And shake the aguey knee in labor's throes!
 Such pangs become not angels, and if thou
 Art not an angel there are none in heaven.
 To some lone island in the vasty deep,
 Far, far, away, in some soft southern clime,
 Where the vile hoof of the vile humbug, man,
 Its hated impress never yet hath made—
 Where every breath of air that fans the cheek,
 Is laden with perfume and balm of life—
 Where the great luminary of the world
 Ne'er hides himself—and where bright groves and flowers,
 Do bloom eternal—where wild roes do feed—
 Where rich fruits ripen and sweet birds do sing,
 There would I bear thee on love's eager wing;
 There would I place thee in a house whose walls
 Were made of polished gold or alabaster,
 There would I nurse thee on soft beds of velvet,
 Stuffed with the down from ring-dove's bosom's plucked;
 There would I give thee wines of richest flavor,

And feed thee ever on pure milk and honey !
 There would I be thy most obsequious slave—
 There would I watch thee through eternal ages,
 Nor compensation ask except the heaven
 Of gazing on thy face. (O great reward !)
 There would I gloat me on my priceless gem,
 As gloats a miser on his glittering wealth !
 No, no, I would not wed thee, sweet Irene,
 And make of thee a wife like other wives.
 A piece of property to own and use,
 As one may use his horse, and make him trot
 Or rack, or gallop, as may suit his whim—
 And under marriage license to assuage
 The seething fire that riots in the blood,
 By feeding it on otto of thy roses,
 Whence spring the chief infirmities that wait
 On gentle woman's life. No, no, Irene !
 My love is of a purer, holier cast ;
 'Twould not degrade the object it adores ;
 'Twould bless, not curse ; ennoble, not debase ;
 'Twould raise, not sink ; would purify, not pollute ;
 And luster bring, not lust.

I tell thee, girl,

If I were sure one particle of lust
 Were lurking in the love I bear for thee ;
 (Which love glows like a furnace in my soul,
 And doth consume me daily ;)
 One base desire, or youthful curiosity ;
 I'd call a doctor, nicely skilled in surgery,
 And have him lay my heart bear, split it neatly,
 And clip a string or two, that hence it might,
 Beat time to holier music. Still for life,
 If I would have thy sweet companionship,
 We must be smelted in hymenial fire,
 And soldered fast by the firm mode which man,
 (Remarkable for cunning,) has contrived,
 To fuse fond hearts and make two fools but one ;
 Oft rendering nature's incompatible,
 Compatible in mockery of dislikes.
 I think thou should'st be an ideal bride,
 And I thy spirit-bridegroom, purified
 From the disgusting grossness in the blood,
 Of the organic creature ruttish man.
 No, not as thoughtless men and women wed ;
 Not with the appetites that whet their loyes ;
 Not with the lust that lures them to the sheets,
 (The spur that makes your marrying fools dance up,)
 Will we go to it—but that soul and soul
 May find affinity and fuse as one
 Like globes of quivering mercury.

Irene. Then will you be my friend forevermore ?

Argo. Thy friend? I'll be thy lover and thy husband;
Not only evermore but everlastingly;
When I am none of these then I am nothing.

Irene. Then should my honor ever be assailed,
As if the gossips should say: She is proud;
Or she is fickle; she is false at heart;
Would you defend me, Argo?

Argo. I! would I!
Why I would fight for thee upon the streets!
Let any slanderer, show his face to me!
I'll disembowel him and feed the dogs,
Upon his offal right before his face.

Irene. Then make your name and fortune in a hurry;
And when you bring them, with your mind unchanged,
I will accept them and we then will wed.

Argo. And not till then. Farewell; the word is said.

[*Exit Argo.*]

Irene. O wee is me! O earth, crack open here,
To the deep down and dingiest pit of hell,
And thence unleash its suffocating fogs
To choke me where I stand. My light is out;
Come dismal midnight with your inkiest pall,
And hide me from myself. That I must play
So base a part as this! That I must lose
A man so like a god; that I must take
A man so like—O, heart, why break you not!—
“And not till then. Farewell; the word is said”
These words will haunt me to my inner coffin;
It can't be otherwise than I'm a devil;
A fury, a she devil; none but a devil
Could act the devil with such devilish art.
I am afraid to stand here by myself:
The devil must be within ten inches of me!
I did invoke his hags: they must be here;
'Tis they that stay my nails from tearing out
My false, deceitful heart, and throwing it
To the nearest dog i' the street. I am evil all.
While Argo is all goodness; his pure thoughts
Go forth for virtues as the honey bees,
Go forth for early flowers; while mine—why, mine
Dive down to hell, down to the murkiest hell,
To fish up falsehoods and blackfaced deceit.

SCENE II, the same. Irene seated. Enter Servant.

Serv. De man ob de ponderous abdomen is at de doah below
and desires to be intwojuced into de presence ob Miss Irene.
'mejitly.

Irene. Say to him that I am not at home.

Serv. But you is!

Irene. What's that to you? Tell him I am not dressed to
receive company. I am ill. I am in bed. Tell him to call
to-morrow..

Serv. Look a heah, Miss; I professes to be a gemmen of honah, if I is cullid. De rules ob good 'siety forbids a gemmen to pack a diswonable proposition. Wid all due 'spect foh you as a lady, and my ekal, I declines to convey any communication 'cept it be de truff. 'Seuse me,

(*Enter Magoon, overturning Servant, who retires in fright.*)

Maj. Pardon my abruptness, Miss Irene. Lord bless you, I couldn't endure another moment's suspense. Why, upon my soul, you've grown into a downright beauty. I shall be the happiest man on this globe. I shall be envied by the male population of the entire universe, for I will travel the world over to exhibit you and proclaim my felicity.

Irene. Have you been well, major?

Maj. Never better; I have starved more doctors than any man of my age. I have no faith in them, and therefore I'm alive and well. By the way Caunk, I have just seen your mother, and settled all matters to her satisfaction. I have also made a will, for this matrimony is a risky business, and we are all liable to die. You heir my entire property, with the exception in favor of your mother, if I die while we are amicably together as husband and wife. Here are the papers, properly attested. I deliver them into your hands for safe keeping. This match saves some of the grandest scoundrels in the world from merited vengeance. I was going to will my entire wealth to endow a society for the detection and punishment of the villainous adulterers of liquors, by which so many of us jolly young fellows are cut off in our prime. And now, when shall the wedding take place? I intend that it shall be the event of the season. I have lived 59 years without a wife. That's long enough.

Irene. Fix the day yourself, major. I am taking no part in this transaction. I am passive. I am in the hands of Fate. I am as a blasted leaf in spring time, blown about my whirlwinds. Nothing shall I promote; nothing resist. I shall float with the tide. Love you I do not, major; respect you I must, for you are good and kind. But I will be dutiful and obedient.

Maj. O, you will fall in love with me, Pet. There's time enough for that. Only be cheerful. Don't go to grieving. Don't be melancholy. I can't bear to see you despondent. Cheer up, Pet, and name the wedding day, (Pats and kisses her.) and let us be merry and gay. How this love does run a man's ideas into poetry!

Irene. I will try to be cheerful; and as to the wedding-day, to-day, to-morrow, any day will do as well as another.

Maj. Bless you, my sweet jewel! It shall be to-morrow, and we will have a grand banquet and ball at night.

Irene. I shall be in reddiness. Here comes my mother. I will retire. Perhaps she would like private conference with you.

[*Exit Irene.*]

Mother. Well, major, how do you find my daughter dispos-

posed toward you? She has been reading poetry and cultivating romantic ideas, of late, and I feared the effect upon her mind.

Maj. She's all right, madam. Whole affair arranged. Marry to-morrow. Doesn't love me, but a young girl's love is light as her smiles. Give a young girl plenty of dress and finery and she will be happy. A fig for love; it can be cultivated at leisure. I can plant it and raise it like a cabbage.

Mother. The disparity in your ages, major, is great, and the world is accustomed to frown upon marriages of this kind, though I think them eminently proper.

Maj. So do I. The world, as it is called, isn't always right. Wouldn't it be absurd to join two snow balls in the hope of generating heat? Let the icicles of age be thawed in the furnace of youth. What is the use of adding more fire to fire? Youth is too hot; age too cold; fuse them and you have a healthful thermometer. Let heat be diffused that coldness may be overcome and life and pleasure be prolonged. What would two cold lumps, such as you and I, do together?

Mother. Thank you, sir, I am no cold lump. I am as warm as any woman.

Maj. I think you will make an admirable mother-in-law. But, good morning. The preparations for the wedding must be pushed. [Exit.]

Mother. The unwieldy old monster! to call me a cold lump! I'll make it hot enough for him! Why, I was offered marriage a week ago by a handsome young man of twenty-four, with a comfortable income. Cold lump! indeed! So soon as it is known that I have a competency in my own right I will not be regarded as cold nor old neither. I will get a husband that can call him grandfather. Cold lump!

ACT II.

SCENE I. A bed room. Magoon in bed groaning. Present: Irene, Mother, Two old women nurses, Servant and Friends.

ENTER DR. SPANKER,

(*With surgical instruments and appliances, which he hastily spreads on a table.*)

Dr. Spanker. What's the matter? Who's sick? male or female? Obstetrics? No. Hernia? or stone in the bladder?

Irene. O, doctor, what do want with all those horrid instruments? It is medicine the major wants.

Dr. I always go prepared for any emergency, madam. I am glad it is no worse. I expected an operation for hernia or an amputation at the least.

Mother. O, doctor, be quick; the major has had a fit.

Maj. Devil a fit. It is the cramp colic. I had it in Lon-

don. They soaked me in boiling water and injected me with a fireman's hose. O, dear! O, dear!

Dr. (To himself.) Depressed pulse; cold skin; abused stomach; too much capon; too much beer.

Mother. (Aside.) That's what I thought.

Dr. Did he eat a heavy supper?

Mother. I should say he did! Why he has vomited four gallons.

Irene. O, no, mother.

Maj. Yes I have; I'm as empty as the air.

Dr. (Writes and hands prescription to Servant.) Go immediately to the apothecary with this.

Servant. (Spells out the paper, a little 'way off.) R-e-c-i-p-e. Dat stands foh recete. What dis? H-y-d-r-a-r-g.; yes, hydrarg. dat's calomel. C-h-l-o-r-i-d. M-i-t.; Chlorid. Mit. grs. 60.; dat's calomel too. O-l-e-u-m, oleum, dat's oil. T-i-g-l-i-i, tigllii? what de debble can dat be? M-i-n-i-m-s, minims 5; dat's 5 drops. Foah God! dat's croton oil! dead shuah to kill. Wid de 'dition ob one pint ob terpentine, dis is de 'xact 'scription I used to gib massa's hoss for de botts.

Irene. Why, Sam! you here yet? Why don't you hurry?

Dr. What has emancipation brought us to! Such unpar-donable indolence!

Servant. It has brought you to de knowledge dat de culled man is competent to wrestle wid de great problems ob life. Indolence, to be shuah! Learning in de culled man is indolence! Oho, can't cober up youh calomel in latting from de culled man now! [Exit.]

Dr. Apply a blister to the nape of the neck and twenty leeches to the pit of the stomach. I will call again. [Exit.]

Irene. (To a servant.) Go and bring a leecher and an apothecary with a blister.

Servant. All right, madam.

[Exit.]

SCENE II, *The same.* Present, *Irene, Mother, Old Lady and Servant.*

Irene. Do you feel easier, major?

Maj. Devil a bit. I'm worse; ten times worse. My neck is on fire; my belly is bleeding, and my very bowels have been purged away; and yet no ease. Give me some hot punch. O, dear! Hasn't Spanker come? Toddy, toddy!

Mother. No, my dear major. The poor man is almost with-out hope.

Maj. He is, eh? Send for another doctor; I want no hopeless doctors about me. Toddy, toddy!

Mother. Pray, major, shall I call my family physician?

Maj. Call anybody; a horse farrier can't do worse than Spanker. Give me the toddy!

Mother. (To Servant.) Go for Dr. Smick. (Gives the toddy.)

Servant. I hab a poah 'pinion ob dis Smick. His pills isn't bigger dan heads ob pins. Dey will nebber mobe dat worrum.

from de major. I is satisfied now dat it be a case ub tape worrum, shuah.

Irene. Never mind, Sam what it is. Go and bring Doctor Smiek. [Exit Servant.]

Maj. Bring me some more toddy. My bowels are tied in hard knots. Toddy! toddy!

1st Old Lady. Have a little of this pepper tea, major.

2nd Old Lady. Major, I have some water and flour teemed together. It never fails to break the colic. If you could only drink a quart of it.

Maj. Give them to me. Give me anything; give me the toddy, the toddy, the toddy, the toddy! (Drinks.)

ENTER DR. SMICK.

O, doctor, I am about seven-tenths dead.

Dr. I see. You have had Spänker with his heroic treatment. Well, if people will be killed with blisters and calomel it is their own business. (Examines Magoon.) Nervous exhaustion; a clear case. (Prepares some powders at a side table.) Give him one of these powders every five minutes, in ten drops of beef tea. Nothing else; positively nothing else must go down his throat. [Exit.]

Irene. Here, major, take one of the powders.

Maj. You have spilled it. There's nothing in the spoon.

Irene. It is the dose the doctor ordered. You are to take one such dose every five minutes.

Maj. I am, eh! Well, now mix all at once and I will take every one in one minute, and swallow the quack if he comes back here. There now. O, my bowels! Give me a little sup of toddy.

Mother. (Aside.) He's worse. His mind wanders.

1st Old Lady. Ladies, I would call the colored doctor, doctor Abram Turner. I heard of his bringing a worm forty yards long from a man who was suffering just like the major is. He always doctors for worms.

Mother. Do you mean the colored blacksmith?

1st Old Lady. Well, he was a blacksmith, and then a horse doctor, but he is now doing a regular practice. It is time we lay aside our prejudice against color. Relief is what the major wants.

Maj. O, yes; that's what I want. Send for him. He shod my horses a year ago. Toddy, toddy!

Irene. Go for doctor Abram Turner forthwith.

Servant. Now I begins to see lite. De major hab a slim chance ob recovery yet. Culled pussens to de front!

Maj. O, Lord! give me a little more of that toddy. I am about gone; toddy! toddy! beer!

ENTER DOCTOR TURNER.

Turner. Majah, is you ill, sah! Let me 'zammir dis belly onct. (Examines) Worrum dar. Worrum hab gone insane, or he hab fits. Can feel him rippin de broad ligaments. He is coiled about de leopian tubes ob de ascendin cavy, cuttin off de

blood from de front sinus ob de quadratus lumborum; and at de same time his head is stickin fast in de choly ductus docus foh shuah, closin dat 'portant tuberosity and deprivin de left ventable ob de heart ob its natral supply ob bile. Dis monster is what we doctahs callsoxhurus ascaris, alluddin to Judas Iscarret, de fust to hab him; and dat's why Judas betrayed Jesus de Jew. He be known to hab hydrofoby and fits. You hab only one ob him at a time. I will pass him or pacify him. Make dese roots into a quart ob tea and gib it to de majah berry hot and fast. [Exit.]

Maj. (Picking at the air.) I see gnats. Brush them away; a little more toddy; toddy; toddy!

Mother. (Fanning him.) He is failing, poor man.

Maj. Where is my Irene? Where is my bride?

Irene. Here I am, my dear major. What can I do for you?

Maj. Nothing, nothing; give me some toddy; the doctors don't understand my case.

ENTER TUBBS.

Tubbs. What! may the devil take me, is the major sick? Why, major, how do you do?

Maj. O, Tubbs, is it you?

Tubbs. May the devil boil me for an owl if it ain't.

Maj. Yes, Tubbs, I'm sick, sick, sick! Let me have some toddy.

Tubbs. Have you been a takin o' this doctor stuff? If you have, don't you take another bit, may I be damned, but it'll kill you.

Irene. We have tried all the doctors, and he is getting weaker. Poor, poor man.

Tubbs. Calomy doctors?

Irene. Yes, he has had calomel and jalap and croton oil. He has taken everything.

Tubbs. May I be damned, but the calomy 'll kill him. As for me and mine, we never take doctor stuff; but if I must have a doctor give me a steam doctor or give me no doctor at all. Now do you send and get the old man Slabbs; he's an old steam doctor and a man that knows a heap. He'll gather a yarb that grows fernenst his barn; he'll bile it down and make it into a tea, and give it to you; and if the pane's not in the bones but under and fernenst the ribs, it'll cure you in an hour; but if the pane's in the bones, its the calomy, and may I be damned, but it'll kill you.

Maj. Well, send for old man Slabbs; I know him well; he is mainly in the hoop-pole business. Give me some toddy. (Irene gives it to him.)

Tubbs. So he is major, but he's a mighty knowin' man.

These calomy doctors! may I be damned, but they ought to be in the penitentiary. I'll fetch Slabbs myself. (*Exit.*)

SCENE III. A Street. Enter Colored Servant.

De berry debble is to pay. Heah is a chance foh doctah Abram Turner to 'stinguish hisself, and dey keeps heavin in de medicines dat works agin de doctah's tea, and makes de worrum madder and madder, wid out killin him. De fool Tubbs hab gone foh de erb doctah, and I is commanded to watch de sireet foh doctah Slash, whom it is de inwarriable rule to call when it is dun shuah dat de patient will die anyhow.

ENTER DR. SLASH.

Ah, doctah! you is wanted at de bed side ob majah Magoon. He married last night and he will die to-day; dare-foh dey wants you.

Dr. Slash. What ails your master?

Servant. Massa! I has no massa, sah! I is a gemmen sah, if I is culled. I mobes in good 'society.

Slash. You doeh? Well, now let me see you move! (*Kicking him out.*)

SCENE IV. The bed room.

ENTER TUBBS AND SLABBS.

Tubbs. Here's a man, Mr. Slabbs, that's been a takin o' calomy and other doctor stuff, and may I be damned, but its a killin of him. Blow me, but I'd give him lobely and get it all outen him, as quick as the devil 'ud let me.

Slabbs. That's the first thing to be done. Here major, down with this or you are a dead man. (*Major swallows it and immediately begins straining to vomit.*)

Tubbs. Gentlemen, he's bad. Lobely's not a goin' to cure that man. I'd recommend you to send for doctor Slash. He's an old calomy doctor that makes a sure shot— invariably kills, because he's never sent for till the patient has the death rattle. If he could get a sight at a man only half dead he'd save him. Why, here he comes.

ENTER DR. SLASH.

Slash. Why, what is the matter? Major, rouse up here. What's the matter? How do you do? How do you feel?

Tubbs. May I be damed, but he feels like a man that's been a takin' calomy till he's about dead. (*Slash gives him a look, and gets one with interest back.*)

Slash. Have you had the doctors here?

Irene. O, yes, doctor, all of them and he seems to get no ease.

Slash. There is need of promptness. (Mixes and gives him a dose.) Now give him plenty of hot whisky.

Tubbs. May I be damned, but it's more calomy. (Aside to Slabbs.) That man is dead. Salt won't save him.

Maj. (Faintly.) Yes, give me the whisky. That's my medicine. Toddy, todody, hot todody! I'm freezing.

Tubbs. You are right, major. Whisky is a good medicine. If it won't save you nothing will. (Magoon gasps. Irene takes his hand.) May I be damned, but the major's dead. The calomy's killed him.

ACT III.

SCENE I, A Gloomy Wood.

Enter ARGO with a revolver, a dagger and a vial of poison.

Argo. It sometimes happens that a man must die
To prove himself a man; and evils come
In shapes that cannot be endured; and death
Is sought by way of refuge, or to wring,
Some heart where ours is shrined. To yield the flesh
To putrefactive forces and to worms.
And leave the curious bones, the pretty joints
To wear and waste to native salts and earth;
Or else mayhap to be strung up on wires,
In some quack's shop to frighten timid maids,
And draw from fools much idiotic question;
Or to be hid in the quack's private cell,
Where he receives his mistress on the sly,
And there stand grinning at adulterous feats
Dead to the rapturous sport; or else to creep
Away down through the years to natural death,
Without the charm which could have made the journey
Endurable at least; and ever conscious
Of the nine times detestable outrage
Played off upon me; and to know that he—
O hell! let me forget it!—he enjoys
My wife! for she is mine! earth's laws and heaven's
Have nothing that to love's hot oaths can add
A tithe more marrying power.—Divorced and cuckold!—
Horn'd, fork'd, spik'd, spit on!—suicide must purge
This foul disgrace away. And yet to die,
To die, to leave the green earth and to yield
One's whole prerogatives to other men,
Is hard. To leave one's books, one's horses, dogs,
Houses and lands, and money if one has it—
All those conveniences one has contrived
And those arrangements one has just completed
To minister to ease, is hard; and harder,
Is't not to know who'll be elected Tuesday;
What wars may rage in the next twenty years;
What little men loom up; what great men fall;

What women be seduced, what wives divorced ;
 Who'll win the horse race that comes off next week ;
 And there's no telegraph nor daily press
 In the unknown abyss.
 O the extremity is dire indeed
 That makes the young seek death ; oblivious death ,
 Annihilation : man prefers to wear
 His faculties clear out, and crawl t' his grave,
 Inch at a time, snail like, until he chokes
 From failure of the emunctories to bear off
 The incidental poisonous compounds
 That in life's chemical workshops accrue,
 In the processes and occult assays,
 Whose grand achievement is the crimson tide,
 Which is the food of life. We fight for breath,
 Till the worn lungs no longer generate
 Electric heat to vitalize the blood,
 Which now coagulate and cold, clogs up
 The avenues of life ; and then our elements
 Seek out their kindred elements ; and each
 Finds its affinity, and all disperse—
 But not to perish ; all will re-appear,
 In different combinations—in the air,
 The earth, the ocean, other animals.
 In fruits, in flowers, in leaves, offensive gasses
 Or in the damask cheek of beauty. But
 Atoms to dissolution given, never
 Can be combined more. So a hereafter,
 Embodying shape, remembrance, retrospect,
 Or sense of pain or pleasure is impossible
 As the impossiblest thing in nature. We
 Might just as reasonably essay to find
 The myriad rain-drops falling in the sea,
 And hope to recognize some special drop,
 As hope to recognize in the hereafter,
 A face familiar here. Well, what of this ?
 Suppose 'twere otherwise ? should that deter us
 From self destruction ? Some there are who argue
 That only the insane destroy themselves.
 Am I insane, who reason me and plead
 Like an attorney after the verdict's in ?
 Mad men are rash and brave. Have I a doubt
 That death is all and there is nothing after,
 That I go to't with argument ?—no, no ;
 But I've no time to die by slow process,
 Nor to stand spinning out mere speculation ;
 I must die now ; must die in twenty minutes !
 I would not live to be laughed at to-morrow
 For forty thousand dollars in my hand !
 There is no remedy but death for him
 Who has been jilted by a heartless beauty,

To whom he's turned his fool soul wrong side out !
 The blackest fiends of hell did never practice
 A trick so sure to cut a proud man off.
 Let hell make room—a man so cut, so cuckold,
 Hath country only there. The chamber maids,
 The very boot blacks knew Irene was mine !
 The pea-nut vendors, apple-women—all
 Knew us affianced up to the very night
 When her consuming heat assuaged a boar !
 I'm laughed at by the raggedest boy 'n the street !
 I'd die for this if hell had nothing hotter !
 Now come grim murder with your goriest hand !
 One sweep of this keen dagger cuts my throat,
 And ends the matter quickly ; still I am
 Opposed to all barbarity in killing.
 I never stoned a bird nor drown'd a kitten,
 I who want my own blood have shed no blood !
 But I am shaken with my bloody purpose,
 And with my trembling hand may botch the job,
 And being discovered wallowing in my gore,
 Be set upon by surgeons and be saved
 To my intense disgust. I cannot stab ;
 Fire arms are best—a bullet through the brain
 Doth pass like lightening and is scarcely felt ;
 And there's small chance of failure—'tis less brutal
 To spring a trigger than to cut a gash ;
 Still it may snap or my unsteady aim
 Cause worser havoc than a half cut throat.
 Perhaps 'twere better to engulf this poison—
 'Twill kill without a pang, you sleep to death,
 And never know the moment you depart.
 Yet I'm no judge of drugs and may have looked
 So like a kill-sheep dog when ordering this,
 That the pert pill-box nosing out my purpose,
 Being wise as new fledged quacks perforce must be,
 Brewed me an anodyne or vile emetic,
 Instead of the life-suffocating chloral
 To give me riddance ; and even now perhaps,
 He dogs me here to witness the result ;
 Thinking to laugh while I do heave and vomit,
 Or else to lull my wronged, indignant spirit
 In a composing sleep—thus cheating me
 Into some hours of life, and thwarting me
 In my most fixed and settled purpose—thus
 By a foul swindle, making me appear
 Thrice more ridiculous than I am already !
 I will not touch it. But what will I do ?
 I will not live, yet scarcely dare to die ;
 I'll plunge this dagger to the spinal marrow
 And end the parley straight ! But not too fast ;
 I may not make a decent looking corpse,

And when the coroner's rag'muffin jury
 Come to inspect me, they may scoff or jeer,
 Or pass some jest that should not go unpunished,
 And show the body of a bashful man
 Stark naked to a mob of gaping fools,
 Of after incidents the most abhorrent
 To all the senses. Is there no escape?
 But for the coroner's jury I could do it.
 Let me consider coolly—must I die?
 Die for a woman? Are there not concealed,
 In earth or hell some direr helps to vengeance!
 By living grimly on through all my years,
 And hating all the women all the time—
 Doing to them every unkind, ugly thing—
 Writing against them—preaching against them—
 Backbiting them—making faces at them—
 Pinching their babies—making their husbands jealous—
 Slandering them, (if it were possible)—
 Seducing them, (if it would plague them any)—
 By these means might I not spite them a little,
 And feed my vengeance some?
 I'll try it for a time, though I may reap,
 Less vengeance than vexation.
 I trust no eye hath seen me; I'm ashamed
 Of my irresolution—it is fear,
 Or I would else be fly-blown and the buzzards
 Be here at conference. O Irene, Irene!
 To what extremity I've come for thee!
 Where is the precious estimate of woman
 I had but yesternorn! At dead of night
 While my muse ranged the universe for flowers,
 And rainbow tints and rubies to adorn
 The coronet 'twas weaving for thy brow:
 Even then thou wert locked in conjugal clutch
 With a worn lecher! and myself, greenhorn—
 I, duped idiot, was contorting rhymes
 To sound thy virtues! Fie! But I am cured
 To the thoracic duct.
 A careful estimate of woman's faults
 Would shock the devil; we see not her faults,
 We're blind to everything except the toy
 She keeps to tantalize us; but for that
 She'd get her dues from bards and other writers
 Whose flattery is measured by their lusts.
 I see her as she is, and being impartial,
 Say she is treacherous, vain, deceitful, giv'n to lying;
 To eating clay and gum; slate pencils, chalk;
 She has hysteria by the year—the yellow jaundice,
 Dispepsia and chlorosis; polypus;
 With lead marks under the eyes—these half the time;
 False teeth, a tapeworm, corns—infallibly these.

She most delights in dress, balls, fooling men,
 And being fooled ; for there is bawdry in
 Her bones, her blood, in each particular drop.
 These are a few of her most marked defects,
 But there is not a trouble known to mortals
 But she's at bottom of it. I do hate her,
 And am well rid of her.

SCENE II. A room. Irene in mourning.

Irene. Occasions make the actors they require,
 And great emergencies sometimes bring forth
 Immense resource, and develop strength
 In individuals or in nations whence
 We looked for weakness only : will is power :
 My purposes are great and I am strong.
 They take me for a vain and idle woman,
 A slave to fashion and to avarice ;
 And think that as I have come into fortune,
 I will come out a flaunting butterfly ;
 But I will fill their ears with other stories ;
 I'll show them that a woman's head is full,
 Of plots and strategies, and that her heart when swoll'n
 With love or hate can dare death, hell, the furies !
 I'll have him back—I will lose all or have him.
 I did obey my mother as in duty,
 For who can tell what mothers bear for children !
 What pains, what cares, what sleepless nights and days,
 Must the poor mother bear to rear her baby !
 Which, when grown up, too often makes return
 In disobedience and ingratitude.
 I sold myself and broke my vows to buy
 Some little comforts for my failing mother ;
 As she when I was little would have sold
 Her dearest treasures to procure me food.
 And now as heaven has taken away my husband,
 And left me that which he could not take with him ;
 And as my mother is provided for,
 And I have leisure for some further business,
 I will put on the stage another play,
 And win fresh laurels or throw all away.

Enter LAWYER and NOTARY, with legal papers.

Law. Good morning, good lady. You are looking well.
 Weeds become you mightily.

Irene. Have you drawn the papers as I directed ?

Law. They are ready for your signature. (*Irene reads and signs the papers.*) I hope the young man will prove worthy of your confidence.

Not. He is a fortunate young man.

Irene. Please keep the matter private until you hear further from me. Here is a certificate of deposit with written directions as to its disposition, which I must also beg you to see carried out.

Both. We will obey you, madam. Farewell. [Exit.

Irene. How many sickly doubts and fears assail us,
If we make pause to listen to their tongues,
While we are lugging lame irresolution
To the front door of action: after all
How easy is performance when the mind
Is well resolved and settled in its purpose.
Now for another chapter.

SCENE III. A studio. Publisher and Critic.

Pub. We have lost on that volume of the crazy fellow Argo, have we not?

Critic. It may turn out so. The fellow has genius, but he is imprudent. He makes reckless assaults upon the vices, beliefs and prejudices of men and women; and people won't pay money to be told of their follies and absurdities.

Pub. Have you examined his last production?

Critic. I have looked it through. It has merit. If the fellow had a name to give it a start it would have a good run.

Pub. Perhaps; but we can't help unknown authors into prominence. We must deal with those who are already famous. I have written declining his book.

Enter NOTARY and LAWYER.

Pub. Ay, gentlemen; glad to see you; be seated.

Law. We called on a little business. Have you in press a book by the young fellow Argo?

Pub. The work was offered, but we have declined it.

Law. Has it merit?

Pub. That is not the question. There is no money in it. The author is too little known.

Law. Perhaps money would buy him into notice.

Critic. It would; merit without money is powerless.

Law. A party that must be unknown in the affair, desires you to advance to the author, as from yourself, ten thousand dollars on his book. Here is a check for that sum.

Pub. That is liberal. We will attend to the matter.

[Exit Lawyer and Notary.

We must seek out the crack brain. This money will bring him to the surface.

Critic. His work is excellent. I have known that all the time. We will undertake him now that he has heavy backing.

SCENE IV. A studio. Argo reading a letter; tears it and rises.

Argo Why should I struggle longer? I am done.
A further effort to be great or good,
In view of these rebuffs would be unmanly;
Occasions rise when villainy is virtue.
And when you may employ the devil's weapons
To fight his armies off. When one is in
A war with villains he must be a villain.
Man is the villain waging war on me.

Your average man, is every inch a villain ;
 Nine-tenths of every ounce of him are villain,
 And the other tenth is tyrant. Damn him !
 I wish the devil had giv'n me other shape.
 It is notorious that no man is true
 To ought except himself; nay, not t' himself ;
 He'd rather walk barefoot to hell, being rascal,
 Than being half honest, ride to heaven on springs.
 Cheated by men, I never trusted woman
 Who did not put herself to extra trouble
 To craze my soul with love but to betray it.
 Are all like these? or does some crooked chance
 Present me ever the worst specimens
 Of women and of men? It must be fate,
 Fixed by the adverse stars when I was born.
 There was a time when I did seek for fame,
 For honor and distinction in the world,
 Long did I struggle in the mad pursuit,
 But fate did thwart me so I caught them not,
 And now the chase is ended. All my arrows
 Are shot awry ; and my most cherished hopes
 Lay limp and withered like to early corn
 Nipped by untimely frost. That man's a slave
 Who has a cherished hope or aspiration,
 And who has none is free ; now having none,
 I'm free, and will give nature rein ; and like
 A baulky racer able to win the race,
 I'll only rear and plunge. I will become
 A misanthrope with hate so hot that it
 Shall make my eyeballs vomit fire and flux,
 Upon my brow a scowl to shed the plague ;
 Set my firm jaws and make my aspect such
 That men who see me bolt as from the devil,
 And grazing herds stampede, though I approach
 No nearer than a mile. I'll move wi' th' plague
 At dead of night and strew the earth with graves.
 I'll shake men like an earthquake—swoop them up
 Like a tornado or a hot simoom.
 I'll work upon their passions with my pen,
 I'll make wild havoc in the social circles,
 By hell invented stories that shall point
 To infidelities crossed forty ways ;
 Backed up by circumstance so probable
 That wives shall lose all faith in husbands ; husbands
 In wives ; mothers in daughters, and daughters
 Believe their mothers bawds ; when all may be
 As innocent as babes.
 My chiefest study shall be men's designs,
 And when I fathom their complots and plans,
 And find from whence each draws his chiefest bliss,
 Then, with red vengeance reveling in my brain,

I'll lay my little plans and counterplots,
 And subtle schemes to trip them. This I'll do—
 Ay, fifty other fell, malicious things,
 A million other foul malpractices;
 (Which, like a merchant, counting up his means,
 I will enumerate and classify,)
 Will I employ to vex and worry men.

So much for them,—and now for women—O!
 Bring me a chisel and a mallet, quick!
 That I may pummel off these amorous bumps,
 The bane of all my life! O woman, woman!
 Thy loadstone doth attract me and repel!—
 Now I adore thee, now I loathe thy name;
 To-day I worship, but to-morrow weep!
 Thou shouldst be faithful; but I find thee false.
 Sweet source of all my hopes, haps and mishaps,
 I cannot live with thee, I die without thee;
 Like a wrecked seaman, famishing from thirst,
 Which he attempts to 'swage with briny drops,
 And thirstier grows with drinking!—O thou art
 The wide Atlantic which my thirsty soul
 Is cast away upon—it needs must drink;
 For drinking not, it famishes to death,
 And drinking, dies for drink. Thou lov'st me not,
 Tho' with a Pagan's mad idolatry,
 Have I pursued thee—O, thou art my sun,
 My moon, my star, my stumbling block, my steam
 That doth propel me. O excelling creature!
 I had resolved to be a thorough villain,
 But thoughts of thee will shame me from my purpose.
 How can a man be other than a man
 When woman's observation is upon him?
 O heart of man! a riddle art thou still;
 Here have I softened to a very lamb
 From the most rearing lion, at the thought
 Of woman, woman, woman! Why, I should—
 No doubt I should—if the particular woman,
 Even she herself, the falsest and the fairest,
 Who has deceived me most—I should be slow,
 To do a scaly trick if only she
 Were witness to it, and if I were sure
 She would be struck with death the very instant
 She read me out a villain.

ENTER IRENE.

Irene. He's here and is alone; now for the worst;
 Though he may stab my heart with cruel speech, (Aside,
 The music of his tongue will heal the stabs
 As fast as words can make them.

[Argo regards her gloomily.]

Noble youth!

Turn not away, but hear my piteous prayer.

If thou canst not forgive the greivous wrong
 Inflicted on thee by a thoughtless girl,
 Whose eye was dazzled by the gilded charm
 That held seductive pictures to the view,
 And lured the giddy brain with shining toys ;
 Vouchsafe to stand whilst I unload the woes
 Whose dreadful weight has bowed my spirit down,
 Whilst I have sought thee to deliver them ;
 For they have market only in thine ears,
 And I must be receipted here for them,
 Or bear them where their then too welcome weight,
 May help me find the genii of the deep,
 That live on skulls and dwell in ocean caves.
 Stand there nor stir not, Argo, till thine ears
 Have drunk the mournful tale of my remorse,
 And pity's river, rising in thy soul,
 Deluge thine eyes with sweet forgiving rains
 To wash away my sins.

Argo. Is this reality ?
 Or hath diseased imagination thrown
 On the distorted mirror in my brain,
 A false creation ? Woman, hast thou life ?
 I either am asleep and in a dream,
 Or else, bereft of reason, stand I here
 Addressing simple speech to vapid air ;
 Or else my senses are in healthful play,
 And thou art Irene, relict of Magoon,
 Whom, of all women, I should least suspect
 Of having sense of wrong, or saltish tears,
 Or conscience to accuse, or heart to love,
 Or soul to ask forgiveness.

Irene. Say not relict ;
 A wife, a widow, but a maiden still ;
 The old man died of surfeit, in his cups,
 He gormandized and gorged him at the feast
 That followed the unholy nuptial tie,
 (For he was giving to gluttony and drink ;)
 And whilst I shuddered at my loathed fate,
 As the bridesmaids disrobed me for my doom,
 And I debated with quick suicide,
 The good man toppled from his easy chair,
 Beset with apoplex or stomach gout.
 Confusion and dismay seized on the guests ;
 And I was summoned to my good man's side—
 So were the doctors—and by the disease,
 Or by the science that essayed its cure,
 Or both conjoined, the hidden source of life
 Was reached and sapped ; the intricate machine
 Was clogged and stopped, and the stout heart,
 The bosom's sleepless, throbbing sentinel,
 That pumped the crimson tide with riches laden,

To feed the hungry tissues, eighty years,
 Without a pause till now, stood still at last;
 And sticky dampness, like a heavy dew,
 Stood on the palid brow, whilst the film'd eye
 Glared on vacuity, and the pinched nose,
 Sunk cheek, and grimace horrible to sight,
 Proclaimed the struggle ended.

Argo.

Did you weep?

Irene. Not for the dead: I weep for those who live;
 Death is forgetfulness; it is oblivion:
 The end of sufferance; the end of all.
 But for the things of life are we concerned;
 There can be nothing after. Thus reflecting,
 Beside the corse, now dead to thought and motion,
 My light frivolities seemed to depart,
 Like troops of capering monkeys, hiding them
 At the approach of danger; weighty thoughts,
 Came limping lazily athwart my brain,
 And for the first time I began to see
 Myself in my true colors: in that hour
 I lived a dozen years. I jumped the bounds,
 The flow'ry hedge that keeps the giggling girl,
 From the broad fields of blooming womanhood;
 Changed was my nature, and one glance within,
 Revealed a soul disfigured by foul stains
 Invisible before; which to expunge
 Hath been my soul employ these many weeks.
 The seeds of error sown in giddy youth,
 Sprout quickly into briars to tear our flesh;
 And error comes to youth in gay attire,
 With winning smiles and wreathes of early flowers;
 And golden apples in the dimpled hands,
 And troops of fairies chanting merry songs;
 So in the early morning of our youth
 Reflection is surprised and taken prisoner;
 The joyful music of the bounding heart,
 Enrapt the judgment in mesmeric sleep,
 And in this mood the fatal march begins
 That leads to ruin. Then repentance comes:
 Comes oft too late, but it is sure to come;
 For the quick twinge of conscience will be felt,
 And sobered judgment will direct the heart,
 (If that the heart be great,) how to atone
 For injuries done to others or ourselves
 In youth's capricious hour. And Argo, thus,
 With reason new enthroned and mind matured,
 And heart surcharged with upheaving woes,
 I here obtrude upon thy privacy,
 And ask forgiveness! Mercy! mercy! mercy! (Kneels.)

Argo. Let the earth rush to the sun in twenty seconds,
 If I deny thee—if I show not mercy.

(If any gracious act of mine be mercy.)
 And if I do not pour forgiveness out
 As lavish as Niagara's rushing flood
 Pours o'er its craggy brow, to wash away,
 (If that will wash away,) the heavy grief
 That weighs upon the sweetest woman's heart,
 That ever yet did plead to swinish man
 When he should plead to her—O fix me here,
 Firm in my tracks, a corpse of solid stone,
 That may withstand the heats and frosts of time,
 That love sick maidens in all after years,
 May troop them hither and in horror sigh:
 "That stone was once a man whose flinty heart,
 Refused forgiveness to a piteous maid,
 Who, in an evil hour, in tender years,
 And through advice of an ambitious mother,
 Forgot the pledges she had made to him;
 And, but for fate, which ordered otherwise,
 Would have become another's—then repenting,
 She came with tears to melt his frozen heart.
 To own her error and to sue for pity;
 But this denying, the malignant powers,
 Changed him to stone as there you see him stand,
 With visage grim and a forbidding frown
 On his unyielding brow!" Rise! angel, rise!

(Irene arises and falls into his arms.)

All follies of the past are buried here;
 I do acquit thee of all blame—'twas I—
 It was my fault; 'twas poverty; it was—
 Well, it was anything but fault of thine.
 I should have bent me to thy girlish ways.
 I should have had more gold and less ambition—
 For love itself must compromise with gold,
 And aspirations, noble in their nature,
 And fraught with blessings to ourselves and others,
 Decay before their bloom beneath the frosts
 And chilling blasts of poverty. And Wants,
 the grinning troop of wants that harass life,
 Led by the skinny hag, the Want of Gold,
 Embitter all the hours that else were sweet,
 Seal up promotion, and, like hungry wolves
 With hydrophobic teeth and gummy eyes,
 Pursue and bay the impecunious wretch,
 And hound him to his hovel, or to hell;
 For any place on earth is hell to him
 Who has no bank account.

Irene. And any place,
 Where love is absent is a barren spot,
 And where he is, a heaven. Do you believe
 That love's infatuation may possess us,
 And make our lives as sweet as zephyrs playing

Amid magnolia groves in southern climes,
 And we not know it? Is there an infection
 So subtle that it steals into our tissues,
 Till it is as it were our very essence,
 And we not know its source, nor feel its presence,
 Till some familiar voice, scarce prized before,
 Is lost in death or distance? I was happy,
 And thought the wealth and station in my reach
 Would gild the hours and make that happiness
 Perennial as the pines. Alas, when lost,
 I found it was my Argo's voice supplied
 The melody that made the gold-fringed moments dance
 So merrily away. Then, had the world's whole store
 Of precious metals been my own, I'd sold them,
 I would have bartered every ounce away,
 If that the shining treasure would have bought me,
 With its delicious sweetness, back again
 One hour of Argo's love.

Argo. But all that wealth,
 With all the other treasures superadded,
 Could never buy a husband worthy
 A woman such as this. But may not he
 Who is secure in vast possessions, speak
 Disparagingly of wealth? Thou now art rich;
 And I congratulate thee; But, Irene,
 If I had all the wealth in our inventory,
 And that would buy thee, I would give it for thee,
 Or give it to thee. But to me no more
 May come the rainbow-tinted moments,
 The rosebuds and the singing birds of summer,
 The aspirations and the hopes of youth,
 The consciousness and pride of manhood's power,
 The thirst for fame and the applause of men;
 And the heart's sweeter hopes than all the rest,
 The yearnings of the soul to win at last,
 The approbation and the eye of woman.
 O all farewell! Life's craggy coast affords
 No shelter, and no gap to let me forth
 To the green fields beyond.

Irene. Why, Argo, you're distract. Must I not fear
 That you have given color to the rumor
 That somewhere in your brain there is a crack
 Across the healthful structure? Like the winds
 You list and roar by turns. You cannot take
 The evil with the good, the bitter with the sweet,
 As here in life they are inseperable
 And thus presented to us. There are those
 Who will not take the world in which they move,
 A little period in their rounds through space,
 As they do find it; but are ever seeking
 To make it as they fancy it should be,

And to reverse the fixed laws of nature.
 They would conform all appetites and tastes
 To their own standard. But the level mind
 Takes circumstances in and makes the best,
 Of the combin'd surroundings ; patiently
 It bears with evils unavoidable ;
 And to the fullest it enjoys the pleasures,
 And sweets within its reach.

Argo. A woman still !
 O that philosophy is worth to me
 More than was ever preached. Dissatisfaction,
 Impatience, petulance, ye safforn devils !
 Depart ye hence, and leave me ! O, Irene !
 I will reform me ! Make me what you will ;
 Like the glass-blower you can blow me into
 What shape you please ; or the confectioner
 Who moulds his batch in shapes to suit the tastes
 Of customers who buy ; so you can make me
 That shape which sells the best.

Irene. Then you shall be,
 Made into sugar-kisses, and I'll keep them,
 And only I shall taste them. (Kisses him.)

Argo. O infection !

Irene. O confection sweet ! (Kisses him again.)

Argo. You joke when I would weep.

Irene. You've wept too much already ; so have I,
 I came to break your heart and break my own,
 Or heal them both at once ; although unwomanly
 The action may appear.

Argo. Are you my girl ?

Irene. Heart, lungs and liver, every atom yours.

Argo. Shall we renew our vows ?

Irene. It is superfluous ;
 And yet perhaps 'tis best, for those I made,
 Were doll babes of a child ; now I am grown
 And know the force of words ; and so I pledge
 Undying love and duty.

Argo. So I pledge
 Undying love to thee ; and furthermore
 I pledge myself to kick the seedy spook,
 Which men call genius, till he shabs away ;
 I'll starve with him no farther ; I will work ;
 At daily labor ; I will get a birth
 As brakeman on a hog train ; I'll achieve
 A little money ; then a house and lot ;
 A cow, a pig, a horse ; what else ?

Irene. A wife ?

Argo. Why, yes, a wife, when I have got a home
 To shelter and protect her ; not till then.
 I have mistook my calling and have tried
 To earn distinction by the force of mind,

While it has brought me supperless to bed,
 And I have borrowed money from a drayman,
 To buy my breakfast. Freight me not with talent
 Poor truck is genius in the open market;
 I'll put my bones and muscles to the proof.

Irene. O noble Argo; wise is your resolve;
 For labor brings sweet sleep and peace of mind;
 And it is right and honorable to labor;
 And pleasant is a cottage with content;
 And genius may put forth its tenderest flowers
 Even in the poor man's hut.

Argo. But hut of mine
 Will never know content, nor have a sleeper,
 Though wooed by weary limbs to soft repose,
 Whose slumbers will bring healing on their wings,
 To cure the heart ache; for upon my pillow
 My Irene cannot rest; she now is rich;
 She cannot take my poverty, nor I
 Assume her riches with dependent role—
 O misery, I'll embrace thee!

Irene. Still the yellow devil,
 The epileptic spook that waits on thee,
 Doth trip thee up! Be still and hear the truth.

Argo. The truth? The naked truth? Why I will hear
 And bray it to the moon on Dutchmen's horns!—
 It is that we did love, do love to-day;
 That thou art rich, and I am poor and proud!
 I'll make a song of it; set to it music;
 And have the nimble elbows in the orchestra,
 The groaning viol and the brazen horns,
 (Cbeek splitters to Mienheer with the mustache;)
 And crashing plates give to it bellish discord.
 The truth! By all means give us truth! Here's more:
 The lack of money kept me from your arms,
 Excess of it will keep me from your arms;
 As I had none I could not wed with you;
 As you have much I cannot wed with you;
 So money still must keep true love at bay,
 Whether we have it or we have it not.
 Possession is as bad as want of it;
 For either brings the other's evils with it,
 And works our bane.

Irene. I have no money, Argo,
 You see me as I was before the marriage,
 That brought me wretchedness as well as riches;
 But I have not a dollar to my name,
 And am dependent on my mother now
 For sustenance of life. Oppressed with gloom
 And in desponding and dispeptic mood,
 And charging riches with my wretchedness,
 I did determine to adjust the score,

And be avenged on that which wrought my ruin.
 And so I called a lawyer armed with quibbles,
 And stock of heretofores and long preambles ;
 Well timed whereases, the saids and aforesaid ;
 And did bequeath, devise, give and convey,
 Conformably to law's extremest letter,
 My whole possessions, moneys and effects,
 Unto a friend held dear ; and this the rather
 As it did place me on a footing level
 With my erratic poet.

Argo. All but poet ;
 Talk not of poetry, for we are poor ;
 But the wise law permits the poor to marry ;
 If like cures like one's lack shall cure the other's ;
 And lest some other fat man comes 'n the way,
 I will espouse thee straight ; let's to a justice.

Enter Serv. Two gentlemen wish to see you, sir.

Argo. Bid them enter.

[*Exit Servant.*]

Enter PUBLISHER and CRITIC, bowing.

Seek you private conference with me, gentlemen ?

Pub. It is immaterial, I presume. I called to say that on a more careful examination of your work, my critic has decided that its merits will commend it to the public.

Critic. It is a fine production, sir. It will take well. My first examination was rather hasty. We have heaps of rubbish to wade through, and a gem may sometimes escape notice.

Argo. Do not popular names give currency to much rubbish ?

Critic. True. The public ear will tolerate much discordance from voices that have casually charmed it.

Argo. Then there is more in the man than the matter.

Critic. That is very true. Popular names gloss over much that is stupid.

Pub. I have deposited ten thousand dollars in bank, subject to your check, and if you still so desire, the work shall be brought out.

Argo. Very well, sir ; proceed. [*Exit Critic and Pub.*]

A freak of fortune ; she may frown to-morrow ;
 Come hither, Pet ; now happiness I have thee.

(*Embraces Irene.*)

Irene. But may I not your arguments employ,
 And plead your money and my lack of it
 In bar of marriage ?

Argo. No, no ; not to-day.
 I'll no more pleading ; bring me to the 'squire !

Irene. But how about that hog-train and that hat ?—
 That lowing kine, whose lacteal supply,
 Was to afford your babies nutriment ?
 And that sleek swine—must he untwist his tail,
 And squeal perpetual for buttermilk ?
 Your genius, also, that starv'd spook which you

Did banish and abjure—will you recall him ?

Argo. I will until he make me voluable,
And rich with proofs and pleadings to refute
The slanders I have said against thy sex ;
And till he bring and burn me up the arrows
Which I have impotently fired at Fate ;
Because I could not pry out the decrees
He ever writes in cradle of the baby,
To fashion its career—and fought against them
While inexorably each written role
Was acting to the letter. I'll invoke
The discontented ghost of poesy,
Until he help me to undo much folly,
In one grand flight ; and till the work be done,
Give me fish diet only.

*SCENE V, A Cemetery. One Grave Stone inscribed, Major
Magoon. Enter Servant Sam, and Dr. Abram Turner.*

Serv. Poah majah ; dar you is, while de crazy man hab
yough wife and money.

Dr. Turner. Is dey married ?

Serv. Dey is, and dey ought to be. Dey is boff alike.
Don't believ in God nor de debble. Dey is wus dan de heven
Chinee. Arter dey was married he found out dat she had
made ovah to him de majah's property soon as de bref was out
ob de majah. Den he raved drefful. Lub is powerful, as I
knows, if I is culled. I lubed dat gal, but she called me a
niggah. Ize bound to hab a white gal, howsevah. Ize not
gwine to marry a niggah, if I is culled.

Dr. Turner. Sam, de ole fellah sleepen dar was pisened.
De crotum ile struck a function and killed him. (*Exit.*)

Enter ARGO and IRENE, strewing flowers on the Major's grave.

Irene. Peace to the dead ; from thine eternal sleep,
Love nor ambition, lust nor avarice,
Can never rouse thee. Rest thee in thy shroud,
Whilst we who come to heaven by thy death,
Will keep thy memory green.

Argo. Rest thee, poor man ; thou hadst thy little day,
Thy little pleasures and thy schemes for more.
It little recks him who doth sleep below,
That I enjoy his revenues, his wife.
The happiness of those who live and move
Works no disquiet to the eternal sleeper,
Nor does their wretchedness. We travelers
Upon time's whirling train, have each our station,
And are pitched off, while the swift train moves on—
Here is thy stopping place.



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